

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 MC-02 ACDA-19 FEA-02 EB-11 AID-20 IO-14

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R 182314Z JAN 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY DACCA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 012320

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN

SUBJ: GONSALVES CALL ON SOBER

1. INDIAN EMBASSY MINISTER GONSALVES CALLED ON DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SOBER JANUARY 18 FOR DISCUSSION OF SITUATION IN PERSIAN GULF AND SOUTH ASIA. GONSALVES REITERATED FAMILIAR INDIAN CONCERNS WITH IMPACT OF LARGE ARMS ACQUISITIONS BY STATES BORDERING GULF. SAID HE SENSED GOI WAS LESS CONCERNED THAN PREVIOUSLY WITH POSSIBILITY ARMS MIGHT EVENTUALLY REACH PAKISTAN-- ALTHOUGH INEVITABLY SOME WOULD--AND MORE CONCERNED WITH ENHANCED POTENTIAL FOR WAR AND DOMESTIC INSTABILITY CAUSED BY FLOW OF ARMS.

2. SOBER REFERRED TO LONG HISTORY OF US RELATIONSHIP

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WITH MAJOR GULF STATES, IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA, AND OUR

BELIEF THAT THEY BEAR SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTENANCE OF STABILITY IN THE REGION. NOTED US WAS NOT THE ONLY SUPPLIER OF ARMS IN THE AREA, AND HAD BEEN MORE RESTRAINED THAN SOME OTHER POTENTIAL AND ACTUAL SUPPLIERS. GONSALVES ACKNOWLEDGED THIS, AND SAID INDIA WAS CONCERNED THAT IN EFFORT TO SECURE OIL SUPPLIES, WESTERN COUNTRIES WOULD ENGAGE IN MASSIVE COMPETITIVE ARMS SALES TO THE REGION. SOBER AFFIRMED THAT THIS WAS NOT US POLICY, AND WE HOPED THAT THIS COMPETITION WOULD NOT DEVELOP. GONSALVES CONCLUDED THIS PART OF DISCUSSION WITH REQUEST THAT US AND

INDIA CONTINUE TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON ARMS SITUATION IN GULF REGION.

3. TURNING TO SUBCONTINENT, SOBER ASKED FOR GONSALVES' ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBILITY OF REACHING SECURITY SITUATION WHICH WOULD PERMIT REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS. GONSALVES, NOTING THAT BHUTTO HAD RAISED TOPIC, SAID HE FELT ANY REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS COULD NOT BE A FORMAL PROCESS, BUT WOULD HAVE TO BE ACHIEVED INFORMALLY, AS EACH COUNTRY FACED ITS ANNUAL BUDGET PROCESS AND WEIGHED SECURITY AGAINST OTHER FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS. TO THE DEGREE THE ATMOSPHERE IMPROVES, IT WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE DEFENSE MINISTRY IN DELHI OR ISLAMABAD TO MAKE A CONVINCING CASE FOR SECURITY EXPENDITURES, AND THERE WILL BE GRADUAL ATTRITION. IT WAS IN INTEREST OF STARTING THIS INFORMAL PROCESS THAT INDIA HAD PROPOSED RE-ESTABLISHING TRADE AND OTHER FORMS OF CONTACT WITH PAKISTAN. HE INTERPRETED PAK REJECTION OF THESE PROPOSALS AS BASED ON LONG TERM IRRATIONAL FEAR OF CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ABSORPTION BY INDIA.

4. SOBER SAID HE BELIEVED BHUTTO DID WANT TO RE-ESTABLISH NORMAL TIES WITH INDIA, ALONG THE LINES OF THE SIMLA AGREEMENT PREAMBLE. KEY TO THIS, IN PAK EYES, IS RETURN OF THE 195 POW'S BEING HELD FOR POSSIBLE TRIALS, WHICH COULD START EVERYTHING MOVING. SOBER ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT GONSALVES UNDERESTIMATED GENUINE PAKISTANI FEAR OF GROWING INDIAN MILITARY STRENGTH, BASED ON SIZE, SOVIET LINK, AND BROAD-BASED ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY. HE HOPED GOI

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MIGHT AT SOME POINT GIVE SERIOUS THOUGHT TO QUESTION OF ARMS AGREEMENTS AS BHUTTO HAD SUGGESTED. THERE ENSUED LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF VARIOUS RIGHTS AND WRONGS SINCE SIMLA, WITH GONSALVES CONCLUDING THAT INDIA THOUGHT IT WAS PAKISTAN'S TURN TO MAKE GESTURE BY RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH, AND NOTING THAT IN FUTURE GOI MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO BE AS FLEXIBLE AS IT HAD BEEN IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, PARTICULARLY IF MRS. GANDHI'S DOMESTIC STRENGTH

ERODED. RUSH

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